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ABSTRACT

To document procedures used in the early stages of introducing programs of Speaking and Listening across Disciplines (SALAD) in higher education, this descriptive report examines the "start-up" strategies for SALAD in eight institutions: Alverno College (Wisconsin), Central College (Iowa), Clarkson University (New York), DePauw University (Indiana), Hamline University (Minnesota), Ithaca College (New York), Pima Community College (Arizona), and St. Mary-of-the-Woods College (Indiana). The eight strategies examined included: (1) examining the goals of the institution through a self-study; (2) procuring financial support for the SALAD program; (3) "piggy-backing" or building upon the success of already established programs; (4) staying open to change and development in unforeseen directions; (5) utilizing task forces; (6) broadening participation through workshops; (7) seeking advice from other programs; and (8) avoiding pitfalls, such as falling into a "remedial" mode or becoming too isolated from the university community. The report notes that SALAD programs were rarely initiated by speech communication departments, but usually developed as a result of individuals' efforts within an institution. (Sixteen references are appended.) (MM)

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START-UP STRATEGIES FOR SPEAKING AND LISTENING ACROSS DISCIPLINES

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START-UP STRATEGIES FOR SPEAKING AND LISTENING ACROSS DISCIPLINES

The purpose of this report is to describe procedures which have been used in the early stages of introducing programs of speaking and listening across disciplines (SALAD) in higher education institutions in the United States. It is based primarily upon descriptive materials provided by individuals who were directly involved in the inauguration of such programs.

The intent of the report is more descriptive than prescriptive. Failed efforts to establish across-the-curriculum programs were not studied. (In fact, none was discovered.) Therefore, only by surmise may any conclusion be drawn concerning what procedures will not work in this area. Nor are we entering into the debate as to whether these programs are advantageous or not for speech communication departments. Although perforce certain elements of rationale are implied and utilized in strategies of implementation, this argument is assumed as settled for the institutions studied.

The individuals whose experiences were most fully drawn upon were associated with programs at Alverno College, Central College, Clarkson University, DePauw University, Hamline University, Ithaca College, Pima Community College, and St. Mary-of-the-Woods College. Accessible published descriptions are available for the programs at Alverno

College (Liberal Learning, 1987), Central College (Roberts, 1987), Clarkson University (Steinfatt, 1986), DePauw University (Weiss, 1988), and Ithaca College (Erlich and Kennedy, 1982). A published description of the Pima Community College program is forthcoming (Witt, 1988) and an unpublished description is available from St. Mary-of-the-Woods College (Dukes and Flint, 1987).

In considering the start-up strategies connected with SALAD, some attention was also paid to the development of analogous, and much more numerous, programs in writing across-the-curriculum. A 1985 survey uncovered 139 such programs in operation at that time, and a full panoply of meetings and even associations has grown up to service this development (Griffin, 1985).

SALAD may be identified as an innovation in higher education. Therefore much of the literature concerning the implementation of innovative curricular change in colleges and universities is applicable. This literature is not surveyed here, but it is recommended to those anticipating change. (See Gaff, 1983, especially Chapter 7, "Implementing Successful Curricular Reforms.")

In identifying certain activities as strategies, we might well ask "Whose strategies are we talking about?" The impetus for SALAD programs, as we shall see, has been varied. Rarely were they initiated by speech communication departments, and in some cases they apparently "just grew." The image is not so much that of a general in a room full of maps as a pattern of development involving a number of

individuals with varying motives within an institution. Indeed, the creativity which has been generated so far has been remarkable, including such unique features as Central College's departmental certification, Clarkson University's communication modules, and Pima Community College's Community Communication Corps.

A notable feature of the start-up strategies described here is that they are, by and large, communication strategies. They involve cooperation, identification, discussion, persuasion, and social decision processes. The eight strategies that will be emphasized are examining the goals of the institution, getting support, utilizing task forces, "piggy-backing," the open door, broadening participation, getting advice, and avoiding hazards on the road. Examples will be given from the institutions surveyed, with special reference to DePauw University.

THE SELF-STUDY

The early beginnings of a SALAD program often may be found in some form of institutional self-study which will review significant educational goals.

In the case of DePauw, a self-study involving students, faculty, administration and alumni generated several "top priority" goals for the university, including "to ensure that students speak effectively." Shortly thereafter the Board of Trustees reaffirmed that "to improve skills in writing and speech is a curricular aim of DePauw University," and the faculty endorsed oral communication as one of three basic skills all students should have.

Thus a move in the direction of speaking and listening across disciplines emerged from a full-fledged study of the aims of the university.

Similarly, the genesis of Alverno College's strikingly innovative program lay in meetings originally designed to uncover in the early 1970s the unique contributions of the various academic departments. The move to ability-based education developed when questions concerning "outcomes for the student" became central in these discussions, leading to a list of eight competence areas, inevitably including communication, to be explored by academic task forces appointed for the purpose.

In many an institutional purpose statement, oral communication is already in place as a basic objective. Janice Dukes reports that the St. Mary-of-the-Woods program originated because the vice-president for academic affairs was aware that the institution's mission statement charged them to strive for "excellence in oral and written communication." (Dukes, 1988)

An operative strategy, then, may include examining the already formulated objectives of the college or taking a fresh look at them through some sort of self-study. SALAD usually fits right in.

THE GRANT

Successful start-up strategies depend upon available resources, and innovative programs tend to rely not only upon institutional energies, but upon outside funding as well, usually in the form of one or more governmental or foundation

grants.

The initiation of a grant proposal may indeed be the first active step toward the implementation of a speaking and listening across disciplines program, and receipt of such a grant provides not only resources but encouragement to individuals within the institution to go forward with further planning.

At DePauw University, the Lilly Endowment grant made the following activities possible over a four-year period: (1) released time and study for associate coordinators and instructors, (2) consultation through off-campus visits and workshops; (3) on-campus summer and winter term faculty workshops; (4) staff assistance and equipment; and (5) materials and stipends for competence measurement and evaluation.

Of the schools which were examined for the present study, the following sources lent substantial assistance in making planning and implementation possible:

DePauw University - Lilly Endowment

Pima Community College - Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education

Ithaca College - Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education

St. Mary-of-the-Woods College - Exxon Education Foundation

Central College - National Endowment for the Humanities

Alverno College - Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education

Hamline University - Northwest Areas Foundation

Clarkson University - No direct grant.

The possibility remains that schools may proceed without such grants. Steinfatt reports that at Clarkson University "there was no direct external support, though I did get grants from G.M. and from AT&T for projects related to the program." Roberts is even quite sanguine about the ability of schools to succeed without a grant: "While the NEH grant may have guaranteed the sophistication and continuation of Central's skills program, such a grant is not a necessity for the success of similar ventures at other institutions" (1987, 56).

We hardly need mention that grantsmanship is not an easy game and that some aspects of these programs are no longer innovative. In the case of writing-across-the-curriculum, we are told, FIPSE funding has already dried up.

PIGGY-BACK

Most of the programs studied did not arise in isolation from other across-the-curriculum developments in the institution. One set of strategies would involve associating a SALAD proposal with other similar programs from the beginning or else building upon the success of already established programs. And, has already been noted, those which may be identified as communication across-the-curriculum (rather than speaking and listening or oral communication) in various ways attempt to integrate speaking and listening with the other components.

At DePauw University, the across-the-curriculum competence requirements of (1) writing, (2) quantitative

reasoning, and (3) oral communication were introduced as a package but adopted sequentially by the faculty, each one year after the other. At St. Mary-of-the-Woods College, a writing across the curriculum program was already in place when the oral communication program was proposed and adopted.

The skills incorporated across-the-curriculum at Central College are reading, writing, and speaking. Ithaca College attempted to include four related skills into their projects: (1) reading and study skills, (2) writing, (3) speaking and listening, and (4) language and reasoning.

And at Pima Community College the program has currently evolved to include writing, speaking, reading, listening, and critical thinking.

In the Alverno College curriculum, communication ability, as one of eight abilities toward which teaching is oriented, includes seven subcategories. Two of these are speaking and listening; the others are writing, reading, use of media, quantitative thinking, and computers.

Hamline University phased in (1) writing, (2) computer utilization, and (3) freshman seminar along with speaking across the curriculum.

At every institution surveyed, then, oral communication found itself to some extent in association with other across-the-curriculum impulses.

THE OPEN DOOR

A curricular program, as much as communication itself, may profitably be looked upon as much as a process as a product. As a context-dependent and innovative enterprise,

SALAD in any given institution can and should develop in directions which are not immediately foreseen. Change and growth are important agenda items.

An example from the DePauw experience was the development of competence centers or labs. An element of surprise was reflected in the final report of the university to the Lilly Endowment:

> The original team which proposed the competence program to the University and to the Endowment had no idea that Centers would play a central role in the program as a whole. Members had given some thought to and allowed some programmatic space for clinics or laboratories to help students whose skills were significantly under-developed. They never, however, saw them for what they have become--key aids for each level of every competence and for the curriculum and co-curriculum beyond (DePauw University, 1983, 4).

A similar note of surprise is evidenced in Barbara Walvoord's account of the emergence of departmental certification as a unique aspect of Central College's program:

> In a stunning move, duplicated on few other campuses across the nation, the Central faculty voted to take responsibility, department by department, for certifying the reading, writing, and oral communication skills of every graduate (Walvoord, 1985).

The 1987 report from Alverno College similarly reflects an organic conception of curricular change:

> Our understanding and our practice have shifted emphasis and changed shape steadily, within our overall commitment. This report, then, is the third of a series of still photographs of a moving body. What may look like definitions are really unfolding understandings, and and what may look like a static articulated system is actually an evolving interactive process (Liberal Learning, 2).

Whether or not the expectation of change should be regarded as a start-up strategy, keeping doors open for

surprise seems to be an important option for a fledgling program

THE TASK FORCE

By its very nature, any successful across-the-curriculum endeavor is going to involve a variegated collection of faculty members in different disciplines. Thus it has seemed reasonable to engage a wide spectrum of individuals in planning from the very beginning. Not infrequently broad faculty participation has been structured in the form of a planning task force or its equivalent.

At DePauw University, the 10-person Oral Communication Task Force was chaired by an economics professor and included faculty members from seven other disciplines and one student member. This Task Force met with individual faculty members, arranged pilot and demonstration projects, conducted open meetings, and presented recommendations to faculty committees and to the faculty as a whole.

At Hamline University, a Curriculum Task Force, responsible for all four of the programmatic aspects mentioned above, attended divisional meetings, planned a faculty retreat which included small-group discussions of the tentative plans, and brought proposals to the faculty floor for approval. Revisions were continually made on the basis of suggestions made during these sessions. Patricia Palmerton stressed the importance of wide faculty involvement in planning and implementation,

> Hamline's approach in terms of faculty involvement has been crucial to the success of the curriculum, especially Phase I. I don't think SAC can succeed if imposed upon

> a faculty. I think a program is much more likely to succeed if a faculty is involved in shaping it and helping it evolve so as to address faculty needs (1988).

Central College, which started out with a relatively informal faculty seminar on student writing expanded its scope into reading and into speaking and soon developed a more formally constituted and broadly based "skills council" to devise programs and policies.

On the other hand, St. Mary-of-the-Woods College never had a task force. As the new speech instructor, Janice Dukes was simply "charged with the task of upgrading the college's speech program by the Vice President for Academic Affairs." However, internal support was generated at the college by such techniques as an "informative dinner," where faculty and academic staff could learn about the design and goals of the project. According to Dukes, "this general information session created a sense of community ownership of the project and encouraged faculty to volunteer to participate." (1988).

THE WORKSHOP

Wide faculty involvement is furthermore useful not only in planning and administering SALAD, but also in building participation as teachers of speech-intensive courses.

The standard instrument for achieving faculty participation is the "workshop." A workshop, through which faculty representing many or all of the disciplines in the institution, normally voluntary, may be distributed as separate sessions over a semester or compacted into more intensive one-four week endeavors. It frequently serves not only as a start-up device, but also as a maintenance

mechanism through which more persons are brought into the program.

The main purpose of a workshop usually is to assist faculty in various disciplines to incorporate elements of oral communication into their classrooms. The Central College program had its very origins in informal bi-weekly "seminars," in which teachers discussed the quality of writing in their classes: later on, fully two-thirds of the faculty participated in month-long workshops. At St. Mary-of-the-Woods, the "first step toward these ultimate goals was to train faculty to instruct speech emphasis courses within their disciplines," which was achieved through a series of workshops. At both DePauw and Hamline, workshops were important start-up mechanisms, necessary to prepare faculty for teaching the speech-intensive courses which all students were to be required to take.

No strategist should neglect the necessity for providing extrinsic motivation for participating in workshops. Thus, the "stipend." Most workshops provide either released time or cash stipends to those who take part. In one institution a $500 stipend is even added to the base pay. In any event, internal or external resources must be available to support faculty workshops in oral communication.

Motivations which are intrinsic are available as well, though. As Walter Cannon has declared, "The secret of communication across the curriculum is improved teaching." This is as good a time as any to mention the recurrent theme relating to faculty enthusiasm for speaking and listening

across disciplines. Communication is a mode of learning. "The act of creating and communicating a message is at the heart of the educational experience," according to Steinfatt (1986, 465). "Our program is grounded in the idea that communication is a mode of learning," adds Palmerton (1988). In a workshop, conscientious teachers work on improving the classroom learning situation.

Finally, faculty development workshops in oral communication have the additional strategic virtues of establishing meaningful contact among colleagues in an institution and thereby enhancing esprit de corps within the program.

LOOK AROUND

The pioneer efforts in speaking and listening across disciplines necessarily had to be bootstrap operations. More recent strategists, while still drawing upon the resources of their own institutions and creating programs suited to their own needs, now have the added opportunity to draw upon the experience of some of those who have been "through it."

As DePauw worked out the details of its speaking competence program, we were able to consult with Howard Erlich at Ithaca and Charles Roberts, then at Central, borrowing ideas aplenty from both of them. Now there is available the experience of the eight institutions reviewed in the present study and the persons most involved in them. Some campuses don't like outsiders, but resources are becoming increasingly available for examining the myriad of options in this area.

Further information is available in the form of programs like this one, of course, as well as the well-subscribed short courses such as the one Roberts and Cannon conducted in Boston last year, "Establishing an Institution-Wide Program for Teaching Communication in Content Area Courses."

AVOIDING PITFALLS

Correspondence with individuals to whom reference has been made in this report uncovered some obstacles in the way of successful implementation of speaking and listening across the disciplines, although most of these were ones associated with almost any innovation, namely getting a hearing, obtaining support, obtaining necessary resources, generating enthusiasm, explaining the purpose of the program, and the like. Somewhat more serious hazards were ones which surfaced beyond the start-up phase, although sometimes incipient at that time.

Some feel that it is a danger to fall into a "remedial" mode, rather than offering a program providing growth opportunities for all of the students in an institution. Steinfatt has commented,

> My recommendation to persons in the position of establishing such a program is to argue the value-added position well and the resources will be forthcoming. To argue the remedial position is to abdicate before the battle has been joined. (1986b, 2)

A second hazard which may unfold slowly is to become too isolated. The program must retain its contacts across the university community rather than become the sinecure of one department or administrative group. The danger, as it happens, has been most realized in writing across the

curriculum programs which have simply been lopped off when they became too vulnerable.

A similar danger, of course, is being submerged. Although piggy-backing can be good, "crocodile-backing" may be dangerous. Where mere lip service is given to oral communication, the distinctiveness of orality may simply be forgotten. This may happen even in well-meaning "communication across the curriculum" programs, when the oral communication component becomes so minuscule it sinks from sight.

And finally, as a potential roadblock, "enemies" have been mentioned. In most programs there appear to be a certain (varying estimates) proportion of faculty members who, as one person put it, "badmouth" these programs. Naturally, legitimate debate is healthy, and in these cases the start-up strategy most often has been simply to go ahead, taking account of constructive critique and otherwise proceeding without their support.

SUMMARY

For this report the speaking and listening across disciplines programs of eight institution were examined to determine what "start-up strategies" might be derived from their experience. The procedures followed, while varying considerably among the institutions, were categorized in the following way: (1) the self-study, (2) the grant, (3) piggy-back, (4) the open door, (5) the task force, (6) the work shop, (7) looking around, and (8) avoiding pitfalls.

Any institution embarking on the development of a

Speaking and Listening Across Disciplines program should undoubtedly examine carefully their intended goals and implications for other aspects of their programs, not to mention the motives of those who are involved. Once a direction is determined, the experiences of those who have already taken this route may well be of use in providing both options and strategies.

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